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ABSTRACT

This paper presents results of a survey that examined the spending activities of patrons from other libraries while in Naperville (Illinois) using their reciprocal borrowing privileges at Nichols Library, the local public library. Results of a questionnaire from 100 of the 7,540 registered reciprocal borrowers provide information on: home libraries represented, library systems represented, frequency of visits to the home library, frequency of visits to Nichols Library, reason(s) for visiting Nichols Library, success in finding library material needed, other activities in Naperville, money spent in Naperville, and whether Nichols Library is the user's first choice for library service. It is concluded that reciprocal borrowers are supporting local businesses and adding to the economic welfare of the community. A copy of the questionnaire and a 12-item selected bibliography are included. (Contains 10 references.) (MES)

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES

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A SURVEY OF RECIPROCAL BORROWERS AT NICHOLS LIBRARY, NAPERVILLE, ILLINOIS

by

Nancy C. Strack

A Report Prepared Under the Direction of
Dr. Andrew Torok
In Fulfillmemt of the Requirements
For LIBS 571

DeKalb, Illinois
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ABSTRACT

This study used a questionnaire to survey 100 of the 7,540 registered reciprocal borrowers using Nichols Library, Naperville, Illinois. The purpose of the survey was to determine if these borrowers were spending money in the city of Naperville. The money spent would indicate support to commerce in town, add to the tax base and indirectly support the library. The principle rusults indicate that eighty-eight percent of the reciprocal borrowers using the library spend an average of $24.00 in the town per visit.

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A SURVEY OF RECIPROCAL BORROWERS AT NICHOLS LIBRARY, NAPERVILLE, ILLINOIS

INTRODUCTION

Reciprocal borrowing is supported by all library systems in Illinois. It is a primary cooperative service which system members agree to provide. Any patron with a valid library card has the right to borrow directly from all system member libraries. The benefit of this service is increased access to library materials which provides a broader range of library resources.

Reciprocal borrowing is a valuable service but there are inequalities. Libraries come in many different sizes. The resources they have to share are unequal. Larger libraries are used more heavily by borrowers from smaller libraries. Is there a balance in the plus payments that are made when system libraries are reimbursed for lending which exceeds their borrowing? What happens when there are no reimbursements between libraries in different systems? Is it fair for citizens who pay the taxes to provide library materials to non resident borrowers? This is honest skepticism which is voiced among many libraries.

Another concern at this time is the five percent tax cap on Illinois state funds that became effective October 1, 1991. "Under the Property Tax Extension Limitation Act, the growth in tax collection by non-home rule taxing bodies cannot exceed 5 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is less." (1) In order to raise taxes the local government

must seek voter approval. It is expected that many libraries in the DuPage Library System will be forced to cut back on materials and services as a result of decreased funds. This may create a drain on libraries which possess larger resources and collections. (2)

Studies and surveys have been done on reciprocal borrowing trends. Most question the reasons the borrower is using the lending library rather than their home library. A survey of reciprocal borrowers would be useful in order to determine the factors that influence people to use the lending library. A survey could also provide needed information on the spending trends of borrowers while in the town. A survey questioning spending and including dollar amounts could prove that reciprocal borrowers are not just taking library materials and parking places away from the tax payers but that they are returning money to the town by patronizing the businesses. This would be a great advantage to attracting reciprocal borrowers to your library.

The purpose of this survey is to determine if the reciprocal borrowers are spending money in the town of Naperville. The money spent would indicate support of commerce in the town and indirectly support the tax base and the library. The extension of reciprocal borrowing privileges could then be justified.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A good public librarian provides the right book or information for the right person at the right time. Resource sharing has long been a goal of library service. Resource sharing is sharing materials between libraries and library systems. It can extend from nearby libraries to state systems or nationwide. Resource sharing includes interlibrary intrallibrary loans, which are loans from library to library. It also includes reciprocal borrowing, or loans between patron and library. (3)

Various discussions of resource sharing were presented at a conference sponsored by the Online Computer Library Center in Dublin, Ohio. Thomas Ballard, Linda Cresmond, Robert Olson, Kathryn Stephanoff and other library professionals presented their views. (4)

A leadership role in resource sharing activities such as document delivery, automation and cooperation between libraries has made library service in Illinois the best in the country. Attention has also been given to areas of service that will expand the availability of information to local library users. This includes interlibrary loans and reciprocal borrowing.

The DuPage Library System intersystem reciprocal borrowers covenant states "It is to the advantage of the people of Illinois that library materials be accessible to them." (5) The member systems permit any person holding a

valid card, access to material from other libraries supporting the agreement.

The aim of library development has been to provide access to materials and develop libraries as institutions in their own communities. Development of library networking state-wide has encouraged cooperation among libraries in order to supplement and compliment local library service. (6)

Local library users have access to materials at other libraries through interlibrary loan and reciprocal borrowing privileges. Illinois library service is divided into eighteen multitype systems. There are significant differences between the systems. Nichols Library is one of twenty-eight libraries in the DuPage Library system. All of the members of this system participate in intersystem borrowing.

Questions arise as to who is paying for the materials that are loaned and who has a right to their use. An article in Technicalities verified this concern. The author, Alley Brian, wanted to know whose tax dollars were involved when card holders were allowed to use any library? Where should the tax money go and which library would be entitled to it? Should the money go to support the libraries based on numbers of loan transactions? (7)

Illinois libraries support the development of library systems, networks and reciprocal borrowing agreements within and between the systems. The library trustee handbook on

library cooperation verifies that sharing library materials is a more effective use of community resources. (8)

Many surveys have been done on the borrowers needs and the reasons reciprocal borrowers use libraries other than their own. A survey of reciprocal borrowing patrons was done by the DuPage Library System in 1988. The purpose was to determine why the reciprocal borrower used the lending library. No surveys were located that questioned the spending habits of the reciprocal borrower while in the town of the lending library.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to determine the advantages of reciprocal borrowing by surveying the spending activities of those patrons in the town of the lending library. Nichols Library was chosen for the site of this survey because it is one of the larger libraries in the DuPage Library System and it is heavily used by reciprocal borrowers.

Naperville, Illinois is located 28 miles west of Chicago. It is the oldest and fastest growing community in Du Page County. The 1990 census figures list the population at 85,351. Ninety percent of the population is white-collar professional, and 20 percent of the homeowners are between ages 25 and 35. Naperville is 27 square miles and includes single-family homes, multifamily complexes and high-tech companies based in modern office parks. Many Naperville residents are young corporate transferees and executives

attracted by the employment opportunities. The average home value is $185,550. The average estimated family income is $60,000. The median age is 30.

Are reciprocal borrowers taking library materials from the tax payers? What does the town gain in return? In an article in the Naperville Sun, Naperville mayor, Margaret Price, said, "Nichols has become a regional library and building a second facility will not cut down on the number of out of town users who contribute to the overcrowding." (9)

In the fall of 1990 reciprocal borrowing privileges were increased at Nichols Library. In order to justify the continuation of these privileges I hope to prove that the library is attracting business to the town. Mayor Price stated that sales taxes are one of the city's biggest revenue sources. (10) If reciprocal borrowers are adding to the city income, that would justify the extended library privileges. Increased support of the library could be gained from the city council.

Nichols Library is a member of the DuPage Library System. The system serves 759,198 people in an area of 613 square miles including parts of Cook, DuPage and Kane Counties. Funding is provided by Illinois State Legislature through the Illinois State Library on the basis of $1.52 per person and $54.00 per square mile.

At Nichols Library there are 7,540 registered reciprocal borrowers. There are 56,441 registered resident

borrowers. Average total circulation per month is 85,000. The library collection contains 220,749 items and total circulation exceeded 1,000,000 during the fiscal year of 1990-91.

Reciprocal borrowers check out an average of 4,734 items per month. Using an average of three books per check out approximately 1,578 patrons check out items during a month.

The objective of this research was to survey the reciprocal borrowing patron by use of a multiple choice questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to these patrons as they were checking out materials or re-registering their library cards. The survey collected responses from 100 reciprocal borrowing patrons.

A trial data collection period was done first to test 20 questionnaires. Revisions and adjustments were made at that time. The trial run also helped staff prepare responses and explanations to the patrons.

The questionnaires were distributed at all service desks in the library. This included children's services, reference desk, audiovisual desk and the adult circulation desk. The majority of completed responses were returned from the adult circulation desk.

RESULTS

A copy of the survey may be found in Appendix A. The survey results may be viewed in graph form at the end of this section.

The survey showed that the greatest use of Nichols Library was from Aurora with forty-three percent, Lisle with sixteen percent, Warrenville with seven percent, Wheaton with five percent, and Woodridge with three percent. (Table 1) These figures collaborate the findings of the DuPage Library System's reciprocal borrowing statistics and Naperville's monthly library statistics which indicate that the greatest users of Nichols Library are Aurora, Lisle and Warrenville. Twenty three libraries were represented in the survey.

Five library systems were represented. (Table 2) Library card holders may go to any library in their system or other systems and check out books if they have a valid library card. This differs from interlibrary loan where the library borrows the book for the patron and they are dealing library to library. Ten of the libraries represented were from the DuPage Library System. Six libraries were from the Suburban Library System. Other systems represented were Bur Oak, Northern Illinois and Chicago.

Frequency of visits to the home library are illustrated in Table 3. Twenty-eight percent of the reciprocal borrowers visit their home library once a week. Table 4 shows the frequency of visits to Nichols Library. Thirty-six percent of the reciprocal borrowers visit Nichols Library once a week and forty-eight percent of the borrowers use the library once a month.

The results illustrated in Table 5 indicate that reciprocal borrowers use Nichols Library because of the appealing book collection Sixty-two percent chose this response. This was a multiple choice question and the responders could select as many answers that would apply, therefore the total responses are larger than one hundred. Thirty- eight percent use the library because it is convenient to their home. Thirty-six percent use the library because it is convenient to their work. Twenty-four percent chose the library for the selection of best sellers. Twenty-three percent used the reference service or reference collection. The friendly helpful staff attracted twenty-three percent of the users. Seventeen percent said the hours were more convenient.

Fifteen percent use the library because it is convenient to shopping. This response is important because it supports the idea that the town and business area is attracting reciprocal borrowers and these people are spending money in Naperville.

Other responses included use of computers, convenient to children's schools, books not available at the home libraries, books processed sooner than home library, audio selection, collection is larger than home library and 'It's a Fabulous Place!'

Ninety-five percent of the users located the materials they were looking for. This is a positive reinforcement for

the collection and services provided by the library. (Table 6)

Activities of reciprocal borrowers in the town of Naperville are represented in Table 7. Dining at a restaurant received twenty-four percent for the largest response. Shopping at the grocery story received twenty-one percent. Here again the total response will be larger than the sample. Responses of twelve and thirteen percent included trips to the bank, clothing store, gas station and bookstore. Visits to the gift store and doctor or dentist received eight percent. Other activities included visiting family, church, drug store, pet shop, stock broker, hardware store, needlework shops, fitness center and park district programs.

Seventy-two percent of the responders completed this portion of the questionnaire. This response indicates that the majority of the people using Nichols Library are also patronizing the businesses in the town.

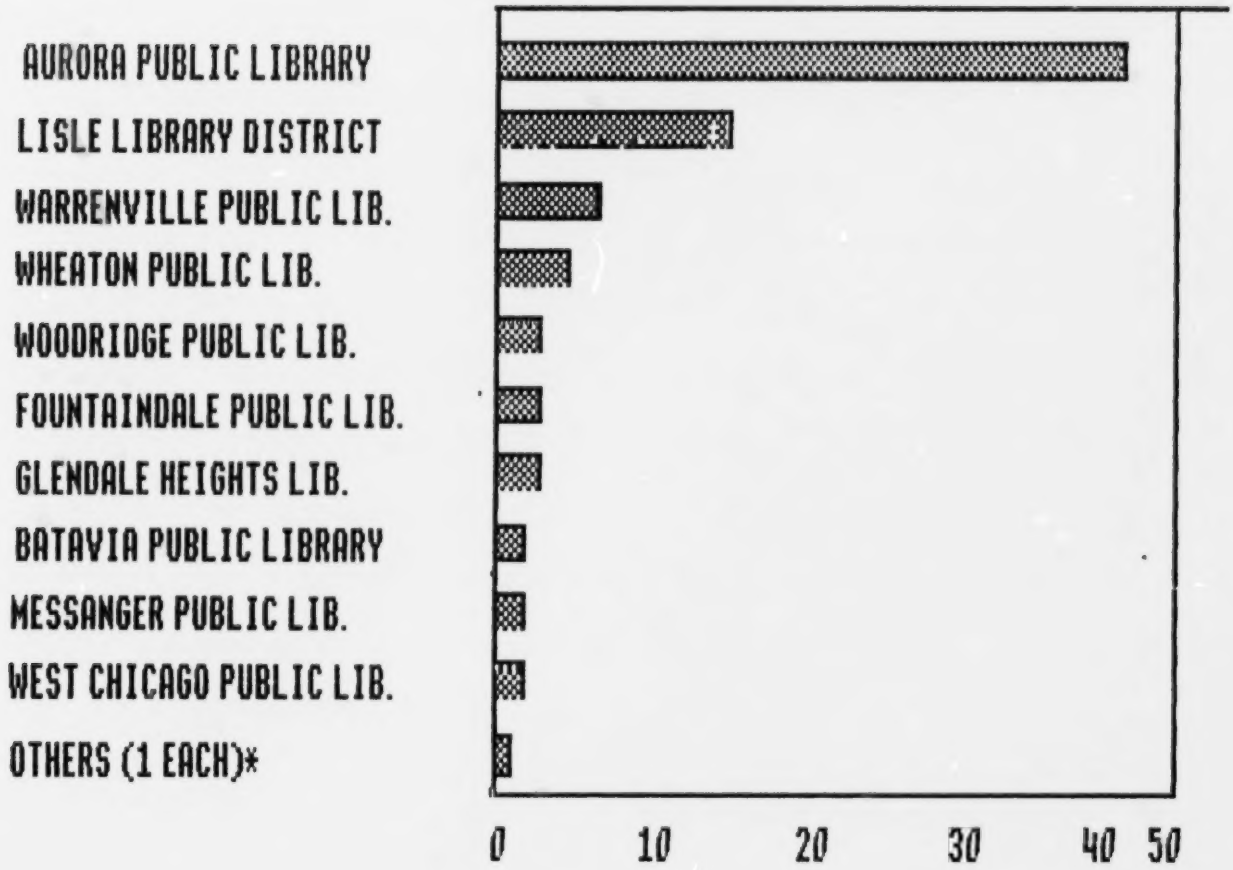
Seventy-one percent of the reciprocal borrowers indicated that they spent money in Naperville on each visit to the library. The average amount spent by each borrower was $24.00. Tables 8 and 9 illustrate the amounts spent. Twenty-eight percent spent between $10.00 and $25.00 each visit. Sixteen percent spent $25.00 - $50.00 each visit. Twenty percent spent $1.00 - $10.00 per visit. Four percent spent $50-$100 and three percent spent over $100. Twelve percent said they did not spend any money at this visit.

Seventeen percent of the responders did not answer this question. It is possible to assume that the seventeen percent who did not answer did spend money but chose not to indicate the amount. Then the percentage of reciprocal borrowers spending money in Naperville would be eighty-eight percent.

Seventy-two percent of the reciprocal borrowers use Nichols Library as their first choice for library service. (Table 10)

TABLE 1

RECIPROCAL BORROWERS AT NICHOLS PUBLIC LIBRARY
PERCENTAGE FROM SAMPLE OF 100



OTHER LIBRARIES WITH ONE EACH

GLEN ELLYN	POPLAR CREEK	ACORN
WESTMONT	DOWNERS GROVE	OSWEGO
NEW LENOX	BROOKFIELD	CHICAGO
HELEN PLUM	BROADVIEW	PLAINFIELD
ROCHELLE	UNKNOWN	

TABLE 2

LIBRARY SYSTEMS REPRESENTED IN SURVEY

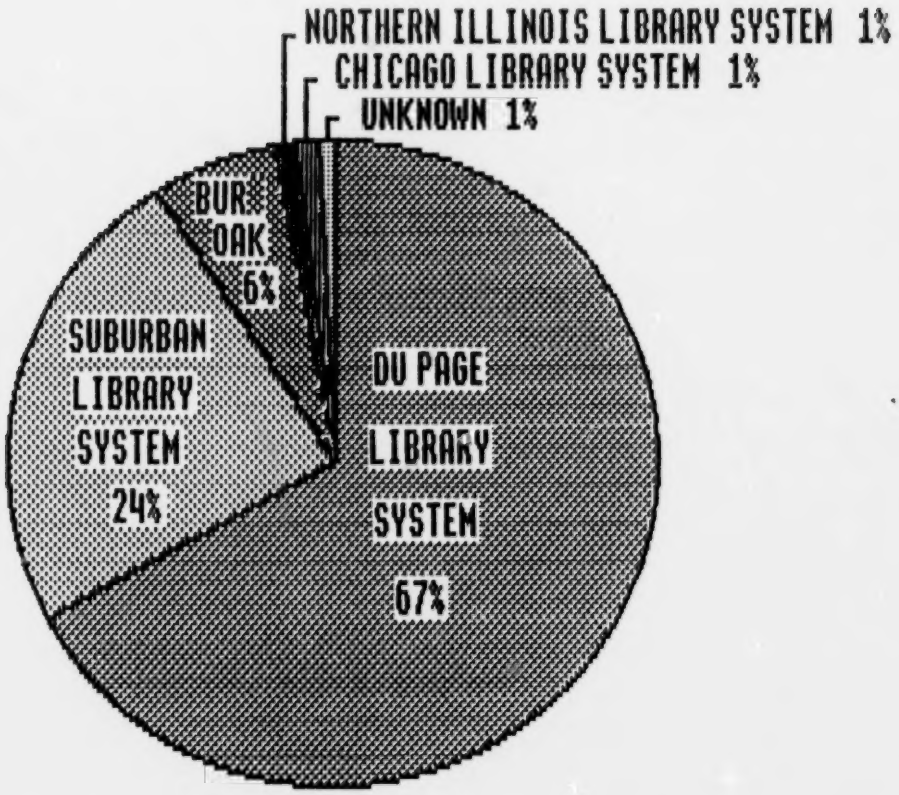


TABLE 3

HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT YOUR HOME LIBRARY?

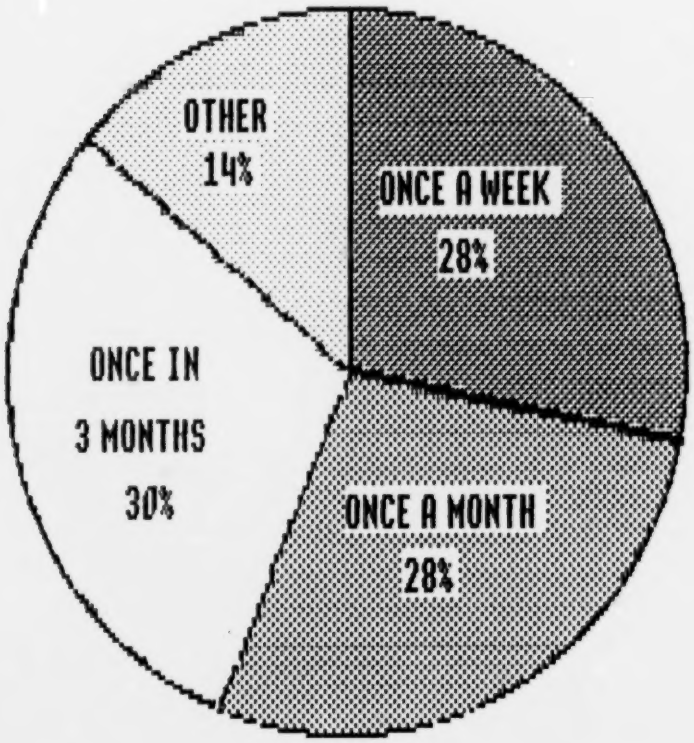


TABLE 4

HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT NICHOLS LIBRARY?

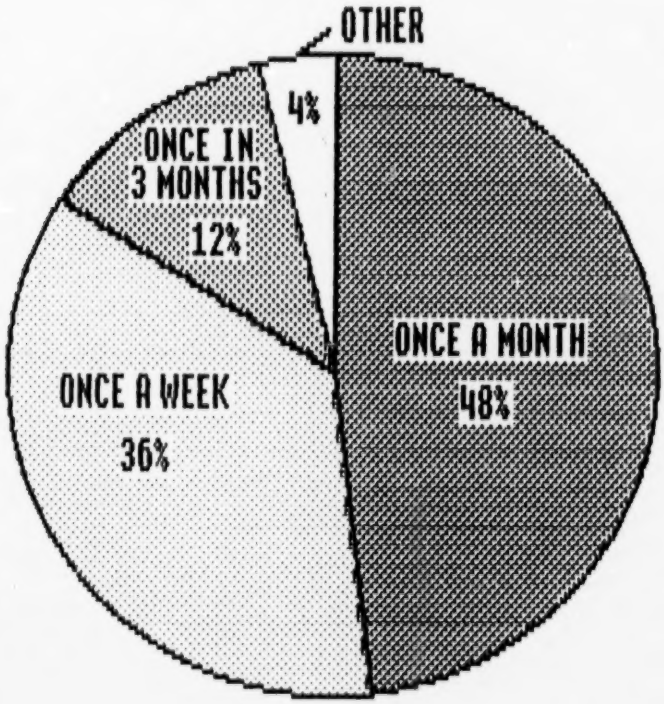


TABLE 5

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBES YOUR REASON(S) FOR VISITING NICHOLS LIBRARY?

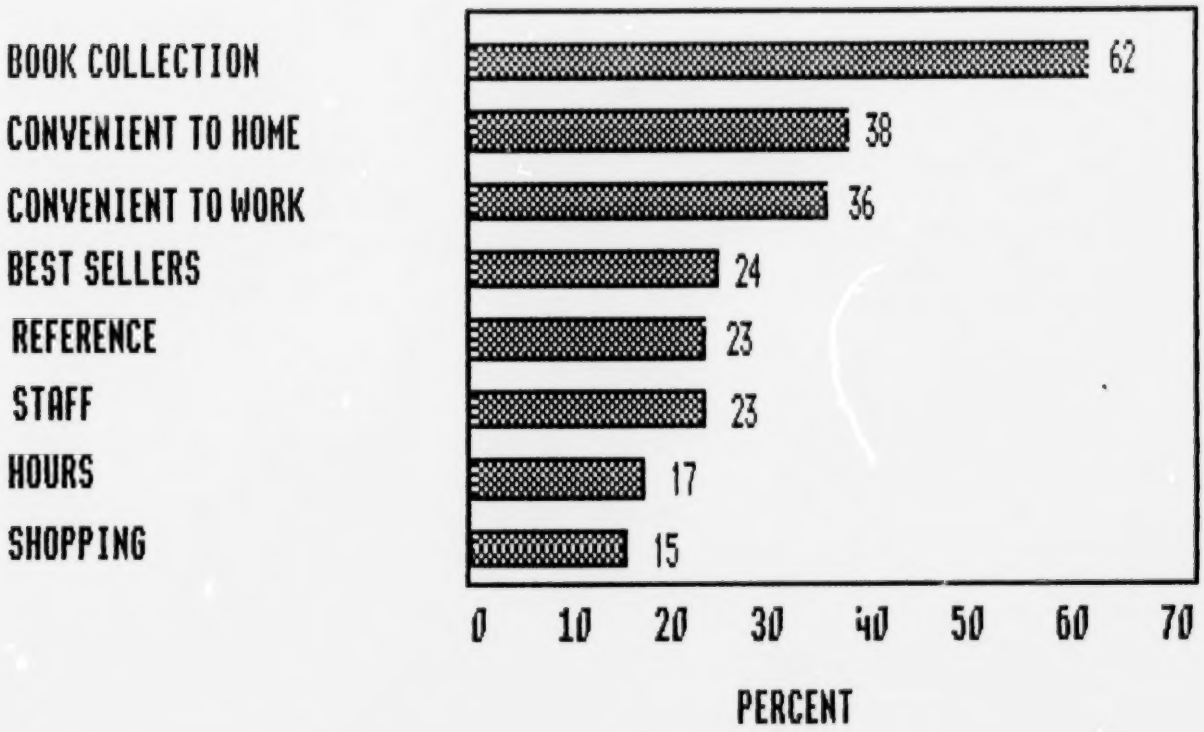


TABLE 6

DID YOU FIND WHAT YOU NEEDED?

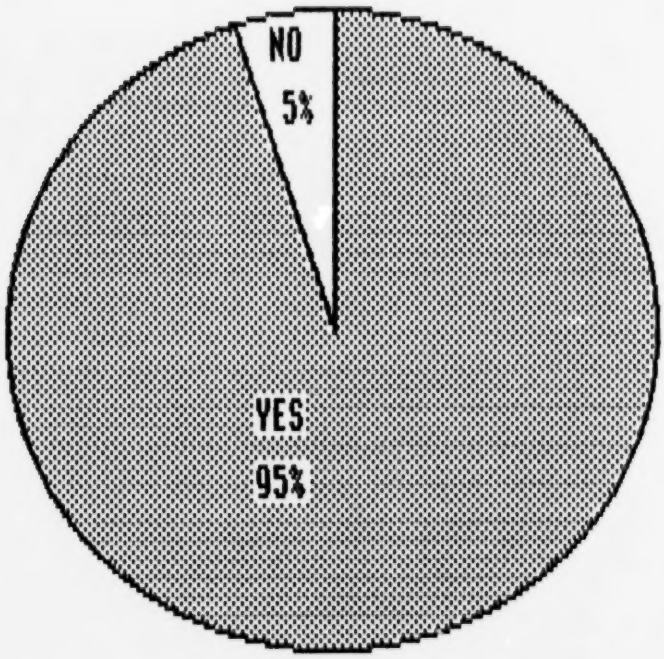


TABLE 7

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBE YOUR OTHER ACTIVITIES IN NAPERVILLE TODAY?

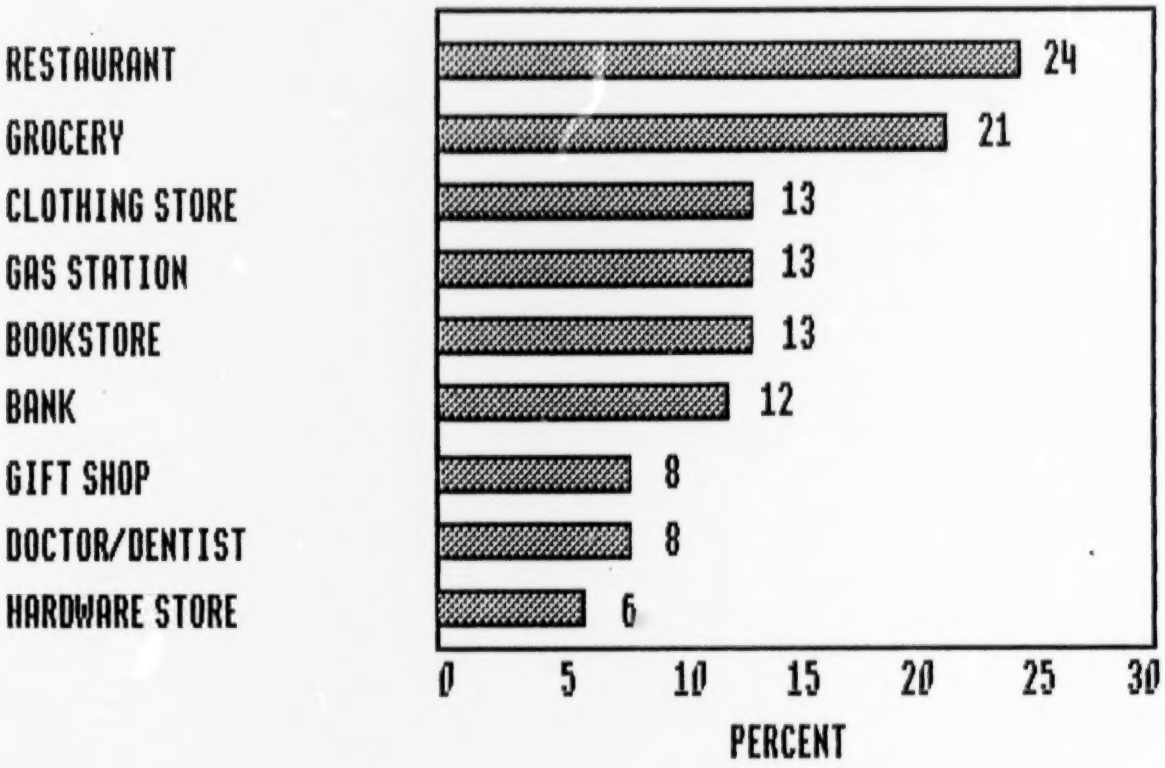


TABLE 8

RECIPROCAL BORROWERS SPENDING MONEY IN NAPERVILLE

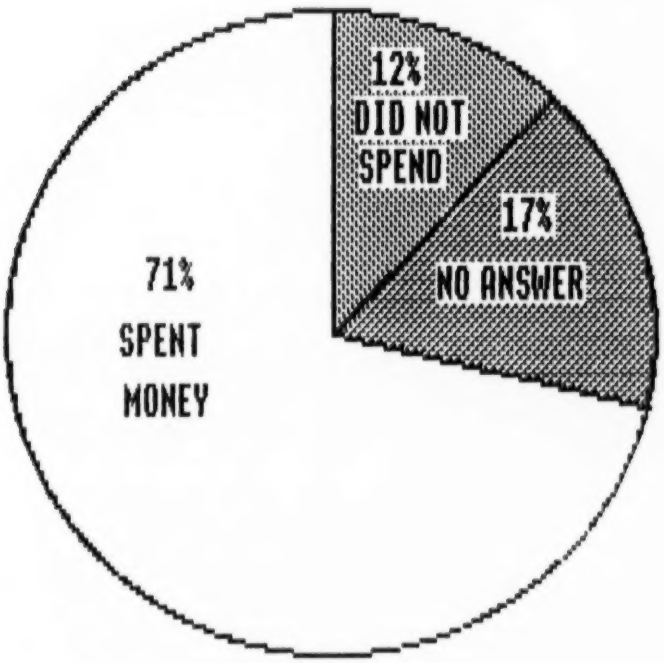


TABLE 9

AVERAGE DOLLARS SPENT IN NAPERVILLE PER VISIT

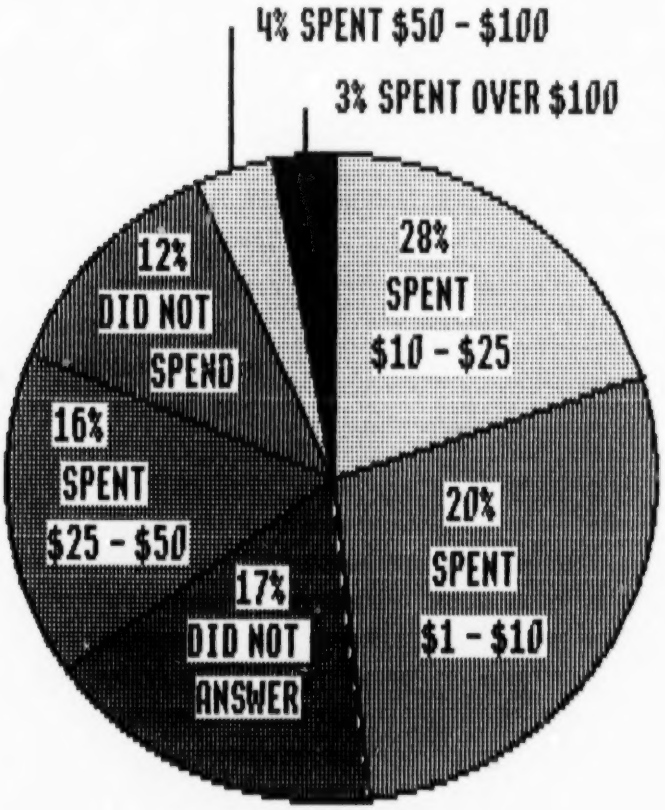
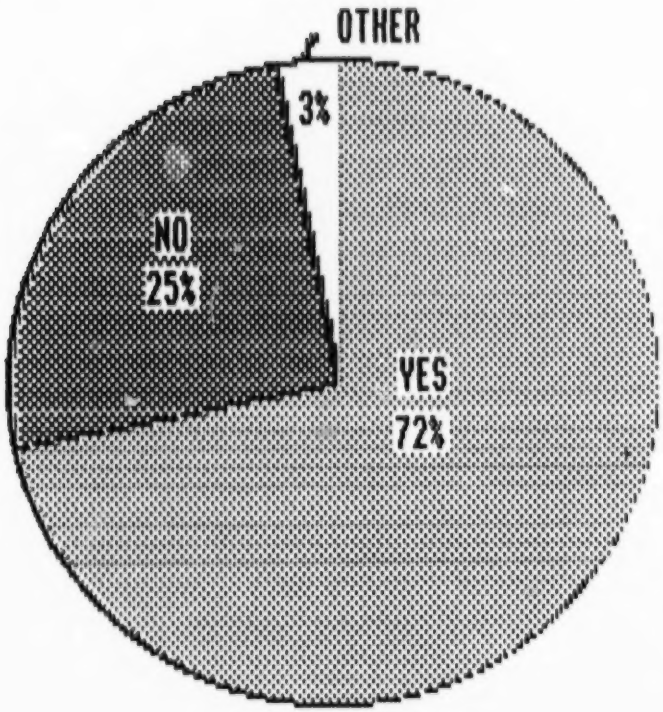


TABLE 10

IS NICHOLS LIBRARY YOUR FIRST CHOICE FOR LIBRARY SERVICE?



CONCLUSIONS

Reciprocal borrowers are using Nichols Library. The 7,540 registered reciprocal borrowers check out an average of 4,734 items per month. These patrons choose Nichols Library first for library service because the library has a good collection of materials. The library is used because it is convenient to their home or work. Another attraction is that library is convenient to shopping or other services.

These patrons are spending money in Naperville. The survey results indicate that eighty-eight percent of the reciprocal borrowers are spending an average of $24.00 per visit. Using the average monthly figure of users of 1,578 this would equal a total of &33,336.00 spent in the town by reciprocal borrowers each month. These patrons utilize the professional services and they patronize the merchants and restaurants in town. They are supporting these businesses and adding to the economic welfare of the community.

The concern of reciprocal borrowing is not unique to Naperville. Other large libraries in suburban areas could be faced with the problem of library users from other libraries depleting their resources or taking library materials from the tax-payers. The results of this survey are positive because the reciprocal borrowers are contributing to the economic welfare of the community. This is a "value added" service which benefits the community and indirectly gives support to the library through a stronger tax base.

The survey will be useful to libraries in other areas who wish to justify extended privileges to patrons in other library districts. This survey provides information on the monetary advantages of reciprocal borrowing and information on the spending habits of reciprocal borrowing patrons using Nichols Library in Naperville. The results indicate that the library is truly a "magnet" attracting borrowers to the library. These borrowers in turn become consumers and contribute to commerce in Naperville. This in turn supports the tax base and the extension of reciprocal borrowing services can be justified.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

RECIPROCAL BORROWING SURVEY

The following questionnaire has been designed to study patterns of usage at Nichols Library. It should take only a few minutes to complete. Please return questionnaire to the circulation desk. Thank you.

1. What is the name of your home library?

_____

2. How often do you visit your home library? (check one)

Once a week ____ Once a month ____ Once in 3 months ____

3. How often do you visit Nichols Library? (check one)

Once a week ___ Once a month ____ Once in 3 months ____

4.Which of the following describe your reasons for visiting Nichols Library? (check as many as apply)

Nichols library is convenient to my home ____
Nichols Library is convenient to my work ____
Nichols Library is convenient to shopping ____
Library hours of service are more convenient ____
Library book collection is more appealing ____
Use reference service/collection ____
Selection of Best Sellers ____
Friendly, helpful staff ____
Other (please specify)

_____

5. Did you find what you needed? yes___ no___

6. Which of the following describe your other activities in Naperville today? (check as many as apply)

Did you stop at:
Grocery store ____
Bank ____
Restaurant ____
Clothing Store ____
Gas Station ____
Bookstore ____
Gift Shop ____
Doctor, Dentist, etc. ____
Hardware store ____
Ymca or park district program ____
Other (please specify)

_____

7. Please indicate average $ amount spent in Naperville per visit. (check one)

0 ___ $1-10 ___ $10-25 ___ $25-50 ___

$50-75 ___ $75-100 ___ Over $100 ___

8. Is Nichols Library your first choice for library service?

Yes ___ No ___

ENDNOTES

1 Rick Pearson, "Numbers in DuPage Fueling Tax-Cap Drive," Chicago Tribune, March 29, 1992, sec. 2.

2 Jennifer Berry, "Nichols Library Braces for Business Boom," Daily Herald, Friday, September 21, 1991, sec. 1.

3 Thomas Ballard, "The Unfulfilled Promise of Resource Sharing," American Libraries 70 (November 90) : 990.

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